

An Eaglemoss Publication

£1.50
UK &
EIRE

THE SPINECHILLER COLLECTION

38



Reading's never been so
SCARY!

Malta LMI.25
Australia \$3.95
New Zealand \$4.95



Want to get the **CREEPS** again next week?
To make sure you get your copy of The
SpineChiller Collection every week, ask an
adult either to place a regular order with your
magazine retailer or take out a subscription
to The SpineChiller Collection.

Subscriptions/Back Numbers

Simply write to The SpineChiller
Collection, PO Box 1, Hastings,
TN35 4TJ, enclosing a
cheque/postal order made payable
to Eaglemoss Publications Ltd
for the cover price x the number
of parts you wish to receive
(minimum subscription 12 parts).
Or call our credit card hotline on
01424 755 755.

UK Enquiries

Subscriptions/Back Numbers
Customer Services: 01424 755 755

UK Trade Enquiries

Gary Neale 0171 581 1371

Australia and New Zealand

Subscriptions: Write to the relevant
address below or call the order hotline.
Please enclose a cheque/money order
for the cover price x the number of parts
you wish to receive (minimum
subscription is 12 parts).

Back Numbers: Either ask your
magazine retailer to order the copies for
you or, in case of any difficulties, write to
the relevant address below, enclosing a
cheque/money order for the cover price
x the number of parts you wish to
receive.

Australia Enquiries

Telephone: (03) 9872 4000.
Address: The SpineChiller Collection,
MC Box 460, Eastern Mail Centre, VIC
3110. Please make cheques payable to
Bissett Magazine Services P/L.

New Zealand Enquiries

Telephone: (09) 625 3010.
Address: The SpineChiller Collection,
PO Box 24013,
Royal Oak, Auckland. Please make
cheques payable to Mercury Direct
Marketing.

South Africa

Subscriptions:
Please call the order hotline on
(011) 652 1807.

Back Numbers: Please write to
The SpineChiller Collection, Private Bag
18, Centurion, 0046, enclosing a
cheque/money order made payable to
Eaglemoss Publications for the cover
price x the number of parts you wish to
receive.

Singapore, Malaysia, Malta & Cyprus

Back Numbers available from your
magazine retailer.

Credits

Adrift from More Super Scary Stories For
Sleep Overs #6 © 1995 by RGA Publishing Group, Inc.
Key To Strands: Front Cover-FC, Super Scary
Story-SSS, Our Haunted World-OHW, Strange But
True-SBT, Puzzles-PUZ, Classic Serial-CS, The
Unexplained-TU.

Photographs*: Associated Press (Craig Fujii)
OHW1(b); Jean-Loup Charmet SBT1(t); Corbis UK
(Bettmann) CS3(bl), (Christine Osborne) TU1(t);
E T Archive SBT1(b); Mary Evans Picture Library Ltd
SBT2(t, bl), TU2(b); Getty Images (Hulton Collection)
TU2(c); (Jerome Tisne/Tony Stone) TU1(b);
The Ronald Grant Archives SBT2(br);
Images Colour Library TU2(t); Planet Earth
Pictures/Seaphot Ltd (Ken Lucas) OHW2(tr).

Illustrations*: Douglas Carrel (Sarah Brown Agency)
PUZ1-3(sp); Lee Carter OHW1(cl), OHW2(c);
Lee Gibbons TU1-2(sp); John Higgins SBT1-2(sp),
CS1(t); Kev Hopgood OHW3-4(sp); David Millgate
FRONT COVER(t); Jerry Paris PUZ1(t); Tony Smith
(Virgil Pomfret) CS1-4(sp); David Wyatt (Sarah Brown
Agency) FRONT COVER(b), SSS1-7(sp), OHW1(t).

* While the publishers have made every effort to contact
all copyright holders of illustrations published in this
issue, we would be pleased to hear from any that we
have not been able to locate.

Editorial and distribution offices
Eaglemoss Publications Ltd,
7 Cromwell Road, London SW7 2HR
Editor: Jenny Curran
Art Editor: Chantal Newell
Section Editors: Carey Denton,
Christine Hatt, Amanda Maclean,
Vanessa Morgan
Deputy Art Editor: Andy Archer,
Designer: Jessica Watts
Picture Editor: Barry Pells
Production Controller: Teresa Magnowska
© 1998 Eaglemoss Publications
All rights reserved
Printed by: CSM Impact, England
Colour origination by: Colourscan, Singapore

Next week in

THE SPINECHILLER
Collection

SUPER SCARY STORY
The Wrath of Pele

OUR HAUNTED WORLD
Texas
Crazed Cactus!

STRANGE BUT TRUE
The Man in the Iron Mask

38 CONTENTS

SUPER SCARY STORY
Adrift

OUR HAUNTED WORLD
Northern India
Intensive Careless!

STRANGE BUT TRUE
Nostradamus

CLASSIC SERIAL
The Pit and the Pendulum
Chapter 1

THE UNEXPLAINED
Superstitions

PUZZLES
Spooky Skyways



CLASSIC SERIAL
The Pit and the Pendulum
Chapter 2

THE UNEXPLAINED
Burning Questions

PUZZLES
Haunted Highway

ADRIFT



Lucas picked up a dry, twisted twig and threw it on the
fire. Almost immediately, flames swirled around it,
and it began to crackle. Glowing sparks floated up
into the warm night air and were soon lost against the
backdrop of the star-studded sky.

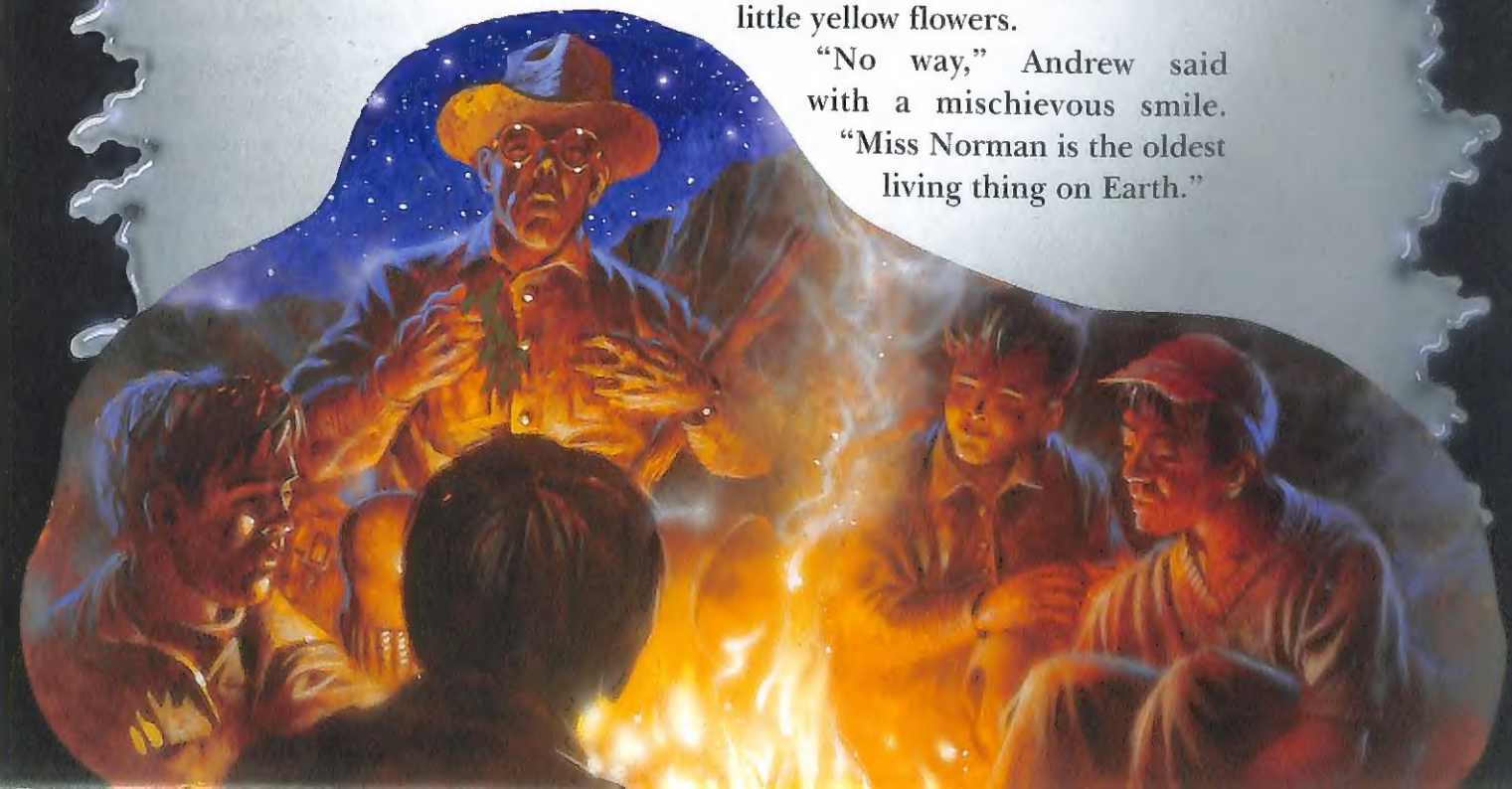
For a while, everyone sat in silence around the wide fire pit
they had dug in the desert sand. Lucas was thrilled that his
parents had allowed him to go on this spring weekend camping
trip with three of his friends. Of course, if Andrew's older
brother, Dennis, hadn't offered to come along as a chaperone,
Lucas's mum and dad probably wouldn't have agreed to it.

Dennis King was studying at the local university to be a
botanist, and he had made dozens of field trips into the plains
and foothills of the southern Mojave Desert to study plants.
He knew the area very well, and was literally a stockpile of
great facts and stories about the desert.

"Did you know that the creosote bush may be the oldest
living thing on Earth?" Dennis asked, holding up a
branch covered with tiny green leaves and tipped with
little yellow flowers.

"No way," Andrew said
with a mischievous smile.

"Miss Norman is the oldest
living thing on Earth."



Everyone laughed. Miss Norman was the bus driver who drove most of them to and from school everyday.

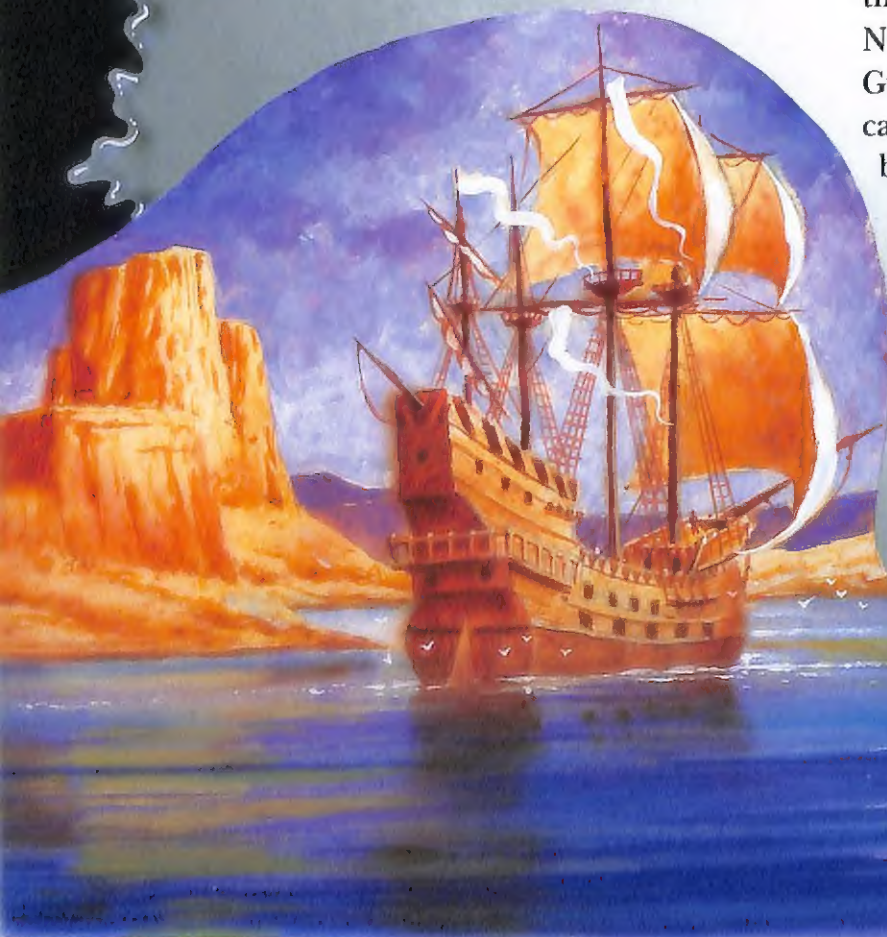
Ted's face grew serious. "How old is it?" he asked, pointing to the branch in Dennis's hand.

"Some of it is nine thousand years old," said Dennis. "The way it works is that the creosote starts with one plant, then produces a ring of new plants around it. Those produce new ones and so on, in some cases for thousands of years. That's why you can say that a ring of creosote is as old as the original plant."

"There are lots of strange and unusual things out here," Dennis added in a mystical voice. "You might find some of them quite surprising."

"Like what?" Andrew asked, knowing his brother also had a talent for telling great spooky stories around a campfire.

"I don't know if I should tell you," Dennis pretended to be hesitant. "You might not sleep too well if I do."



"Oh, come on Dennis," Lucas begged.

The others joined in, and Dennis finally agreed to tell them a story. He leaned towards the fire. The flames caused ribbons of light and shadow to flicker across his face.



Then he began. "This is a tale of an amazing ghost ship," he whispered dramatically. "A Spanish galleon has sailed in search of its lost treasure for nearly three hundred years."

"Wait a minute," Kevin said with a look of disbelief. "We're in the Mojave Desert. The last time I checked, there weren't many ships sailing through here."

Ted, Rick, and Lucas burst into laughter. "You can laugh if you like," Dennis snarled. "It just so happens that a long time ago, when Mexico was known as New Spain, Spanish ships sailed in the Gulf of California. Sometimes those ships carried treasures meant to be transported back to Spain." He paused and looked at each of the four boys in turn. "One in particular carried a fortune in pearls, but that ill-fated ship never reached its destination."

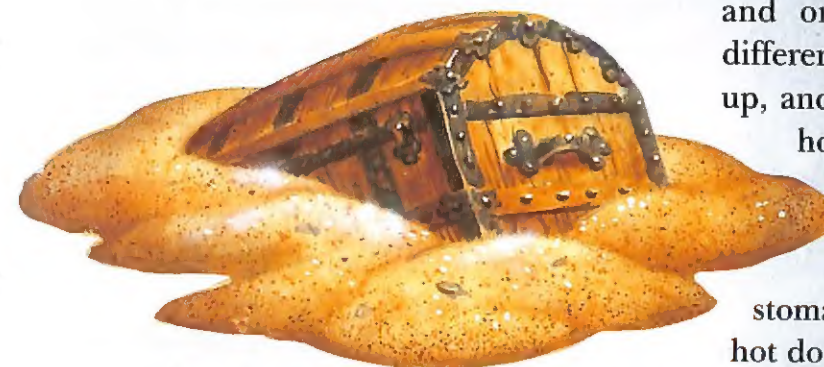
"What happened to it?" Lucas asked.

Dennis leaned back. "That was the year of the great floods," he answered, as if telling the tale from his own experience. "The Colorado River overflowed and the unfortunate ship sailed much farther north than it should

have. Eventually it became grounded somewhere in this area. Then when the floodwaters receded, the ship was stranded in the desert. Most of the crew wanted to set out on foot, but the captain and a few loyal sailors refused to leave the treasure that they had vowed to protect."

"So what did they do then?" Andrew murmured. He thought he'd heard all of his brother's stories, but this one was new to him.

Dennis looked right into his brother's eyes. "The crew murdered the captain and all of his followers," he responded with contempt. "Then they buried the treasure



somewhere in the foothills. They probably thought they might be rescued, and then they could come back for it. One survivor was discovered near death somewhere around here, but the rest of the sailors were never seen again... not alive, that is."

"Here it comes," Rick whispered to Lucas. Both boys rolled their eyes and waited for the scary finish.

"To this day," Dennis continued, "a ghostly ship and crew are occasionally sighted sailing the desert in search of the lost treasure... the murderous crew spurred on by their phantom captain." He put his finger to his lips, then looked from side to side, peering into the shadows beyond the glow of the fire. "Some say that if you try hard enough,

you can hear the creak of the rigging and the fluttering of sails in the wind."

Everyone sat quietly for a moment. "So," Kevin asked at last, "does that mean the treasure is still out here?"

"That's what people say," Dennis answered. "I've even seen prospectors in this area looking for it. But if a chest full of pearls is really buried in these foothills, finding it will take a lot of luck."

"Didn't the survivor tell anyone where it was buried?" Lucas asked.

Dennis shook his head. "It wouldn't have done any good if he had. Sandstorms can whip up out here without any warning, and once they've passed, things look different. Some landmarks can be covered up, and others uncovered. It's easy to see how something could be hopelessly lost."

"There may be a treasure out here," Rick said, rubbing his stomach, "but right now I'd settle for a hot dog."

Everyone agreed, and soon they were all roasting juicy sausages over the fire.



Shortly afterwards, the boys wriggled into their sleeping bags that were rolled out on the dry ground.

"Hey, Andrew," Lucas whispered. "Are you still awake?"

"Yeah," his friend replied quietly.

"I've been thinking. It would be really great to find that treasure. Maybe we could look for it."

There was no answer.

"Andrew?" Lucas spoke a little louder.

"Shhhhh." Andrew moved closer and spoke softly so he was certain that only Lucas could hear him. "I've just had an excellent idea," he said with a devilish tone. "But I don't want to talk about it now. I'll tell you in the morning."

Andrew had a reputation for playing pranks, and Lucas was glad he was going to be in on it instead of being the brunt of it. Rolling over on to his back, he put his hands behind his head and gazed up at the stars, wondering what trick his friend had in mind.



When the sun came up the next morning, Dennis lit a fire in the sandpit and started scrambling eggs in a large iron frying-pan.

After breakfast, the boys hiked across a wide, sandy plain with their backpacks and spent the day exploring a gorge not far from their campsite.

Once they were in the gorge, Andrew

pulled Lucas aside and pointed to a canyon two hundred metres farther north.

"There's an abandoned mine in that canyon," Andrew whispered. "It's loaded with empty crates left behind by the miners. Dennis has taken me up there a few times." He grinned. "It'll be perfect."

"Perfect for what?" Lucas asked in confusion.

Andrew's mischievous grin grew wider. "We'll sneak up there tonight and pick up a crate. We can fill it full of sand and rocks to weight it down, then half bury it near the campsite where one of the guys will find it in the morning." He tried to contain his laughter. "I guarantee whoever finds it will be convinced he's discovered the lost treasure. Then everyone will go crazy trying to dig for it."

Lucas frowned. "Nobody's going to fall for that."

"Oh, come on," Andrew pleaded. "It's worth a try."

Later that evening, once everyone was asleep, Andrew and Lucas crept silently from the campsite.

"Are you sure you know where you're going?" Lucas whispered.

Andrew grinned at him. "I've been up here before. Besides, it's a full moon so we'll be able to see the campsite even from a distance. There's no way we can get lost."

Lucas looked at the sky. Andrew did have a point. The night was crystal clear.

"OK," he said to his friend. "You're the boss."



Alight, warm wind had started to blow as the boys crossed the dunes. Lucas's feet sank deep into the sand with each step, making it difficult to walk. By the time they reached the canyon, he was exhausted. To make things worse, the wind had picked up lifting clouds of sand into the air, making it hard to see.

"I don't like this," Lucas said nervously. "Maybe we should go back."

"It isn't much farther," Andrew coaxed. "We're already here, so we might as well get what we came for."

"Yeah, but..." Lucas fell to the ground with a grunt. A drop of blood trickled out from a jagged cut on his thumb.

Andrew flopped down beside him. "What did you cut it on?"

"Probably on that," he answered, pointing to a band of metal protruding from the coarse sand under the outcropping.

Andrew crawled over and scooped away some of the loose sand around the metal. "It's attached to something!"

With his uninjured hand, Lucas helped his friend dig. In moments, they uncovered what appeared to be the rotting

top of a fairly large chest. The metal strip was one of the two bands that had been wrapped around the chest to seal it shut. Unlike the first band, the other one was still intact, but badly corroded. Andrew pulled out his penknife and pried at it until it popped open.

The two boys looked at it for a moment, each knowing what the other was thinking. Finally, Andrew placed his hands on the lid of the chest and slowly lifted it open. Then he gasped in wonder. All Lucas could do was stare, speechless. Inside, dozens – perhaps hundreds – of huge pearls glimmered in the moonlight.



"I don't believe this," Andrew stood up and shouted into the rising wind. "It's real! The treasure is real, and we discovered it!"

All at once Lucas found his voice. "Let's try to get it out!"

Together the boys struggled to lift the chest out from under the low rocky shelf, but it wouldn't budge. "We have to get some help!" Lucas yelled, trying to shield his face from the blowing sand. He and Andrew scrambled to their feet and started to head for the mouth of the canyon. "Wait!" Lucas shouted over the howling wind. He ran back to the ancient chest and grabbed a large pearl. "Let's go," he said. "Now I've got proof so the others will believe us."



When they reached the end of the canyon, the plain between them and the campsite was a mass of shifting sand that stung their faces and hands, and it was getting worse by the minute.

"We won't get far in this," Lucas hollered. "We'll have to find some shelter here."

They squeezed into a wide cleft between two boulders. The wind screeched and wailed like a wounded animal. Lucas pressed his eyes shut and covered his ears. Finally the terrible blast subsided and the sandstorm was over as quickly as it had started.

The boys wriggled from their hiding place and headed to the mouth of the canyon. Everything was strangely silent. The moon had slipped behind a thick band of cloud, and there was an unearthly chill in the air.

"I don't like this," Lucas muttered. "It doesn't feel right."

"Hush!" Andrew ordered. "Did you hear that?"

Lucas listened. There was something, but what he thought it was just couldn't be. But as the sound drew louder and closer, he couldn't deny that it was a creaking noise, like timbers rubbing against each other. Peering into the night, the boys caught sight of something moving somehow above the sand dunes.

'Run!' Lucas's mind screamed. But no matter how much he willed his trembling body to move, he could not budge. He sensed that Andrew, too, shared his terror. There above the darkened plain, a pale, glowing ghost ship rose and fell on the

invisible waves of a spectral sea. The ship's sails billowed out as if a brisk wind filled them. As the boys gaped helplessly, the ship sailed closer... close enough so that

Lucas could make out shadowy figures on deck. It glided within a few metres of them and then stopped, blocking off any hope of escape. The air became damp and reeked of salt and seawater.

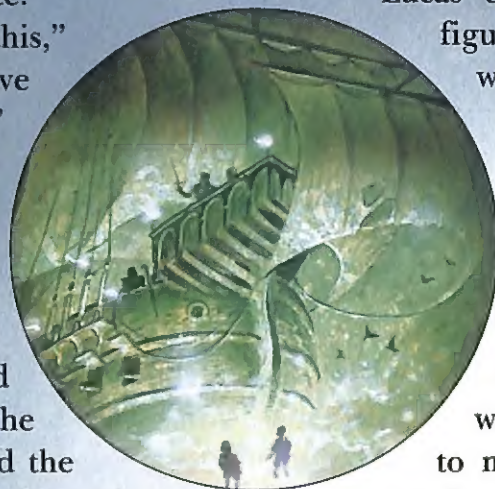
Finding it hard to breathe, Lucas felt like he was drowning. He struggled to move and then everything went hazy. When his vision cleared, he found himself lying next to Andrew on the rotting deck of an ancient ship.

"W-where on Earth are we?" Andrew stammered.

Lucas said nothing, fearing the only possible answer. The smell of mould filled his nostrils, and he was chilled to the bone.

"Noooooooo!" Lucas wailed in terror as phantom hands gripped him and shoved him below deck into a small chamber. He landed in a heap on the floor, and beside him was Andrew.

Something walked very slowly and carefully across the wooden floorboards, then stopped a few steps from where the boys huddled. Lucas risked a glance upwards and tried not to gag. The spirit of the ship's captain leaned over them, the grisly head wound that had caused his death still oozing on his ghostly forehead.



"Where did you find this?" the gruesome creature asked in a hollow voice, as he held up the pearl from the chest.

"I can s-show you," he stuttered, forcing himself to speak. "If you let us go."

"Done!" the hideous spectre agreed.

Within moments, Lucas and Andrew were leaning over the railing of the ghost ship as it sailed silently along the canyon.

"I can't see it!" Andrew sobbed. "I can't see the spot where we found the treasure."

Lucas scanned every bit of the canyon, but the low outcropping of rock was nowhere to be found. During the storm, the sands of the canyon floor had shifted completely, and nothing was familiar. The heaps and piles of sand and rock all looked the same. There was no way he could pick out the spot where the chest lay buried.

"It was here!" he cried, but already the ship was turning back towards the murky, phantom sea that it was doomed to sail until the elusive treasure was finally found.

"Now you must join us in our search," cried the captain. "Even if it lasts forever!"

THE END



OUR HAUNTED WORLD

India has a rich history of bizarre events and supernatural stories. Here SpineChiller visits some northern provinces...



SCARRED BY THE PAST?

In India, during his research into reincarnation, Ian Stevenson, a Canadian doctor, talked to many children who claimed to remember past lives. One boy, Ravi Shankar, could recall a life as a boy named Munna, who had been killed by a barber and a washerwoman. A long, jagged knife had been used to cut his throat. The doctor found out that a boy called Munna had been murdered, as described, six months before Ravi's birth. The suspects had been a barber and a washerwoman. But neither this nor the fact that Ravi had a long, wide, unexplained scar on his neck, could prove that Ravi was once Munna.

THE THIRSTY STATUES

As usual, at the September 1995 religious festival in New Delhi (right), people left milk for the souls of their ancestors in front of the marble statue of Ganesha, the elephant-headed Hindu deity. What was not usual was that the statue began to draw up the milk through its trunk! Similar reports came – on that same day – from Hindu temples worldwide. In London, milk sales soared!

Certain statues made of absorbent material could have just soaked up the milk – but how did a small silver statue of Ganesha in Hong Kong manage to 'drink' 20 litres?



DRAGONS OF THE GANGES

In the Sunderbans tidal forest at the mouth of the River Ganges, seven-metre 'dragons' have been reported! Said to be giant monitor lizards (Latin: *varanus giganteus*), they are an aggressive, predatory species. But even the world's largest known monitor, Indonesia's Komodo 'dragon' (*varanus komodoensis*) only grows to four metres. So are these giants really mutant monitors, prehistoric relics, or an unknown species?



WOW! NOW THAT'S WILD!

In 1920 in Midnapore, west of Calcutta, when two human-like 'demons or phantoms' began to leap from holes in the ground and terrify villagers, Rev Joseph Singh went to investigate. At dusk, he hid near the holes and waited. Two adult wolves came out, then a tumble of cubs and the two 'demons', who were really two young girls. It was assumed that they'd been raised by the wolves, for they howled and walked on all fours!

THE TRAGIC CLOWN

In the 1750s, the Maharajah of Jaipur, in a right royal bad mood, said that he would behead his ministers if they didn't entertain him! Spurred into action, the ministers found a travelling circus with a brilliant Spanish clown, called Pepe Dindoneau. Pepe's skill impressed the prince and he soon became part of the royal household. Long after the maharajah died, Pepe was about to dance his old clown dance at a festival, when a thug lashed at Pepe's wife with a cat-o'-nine tails whip. She grasped their son's hand and ran, in panic, into an old wall which collapsed under the impact. Mother and son died as they fell into a rocky crevice far below. Pepe and his friends sealed the crevice with stones to make a tomb. The clown never performed again – and he died a broken-hearted man. But his ghost still roams. People claim to have seen Pepe as a young clown, doing acrobatics or mid-air tightrope walking. Or, when the moon is full, he's been seen as an old man in a frayed clown's costume searching in the rocky crevices for his lost loves.



INTENSIVE CARELESS!

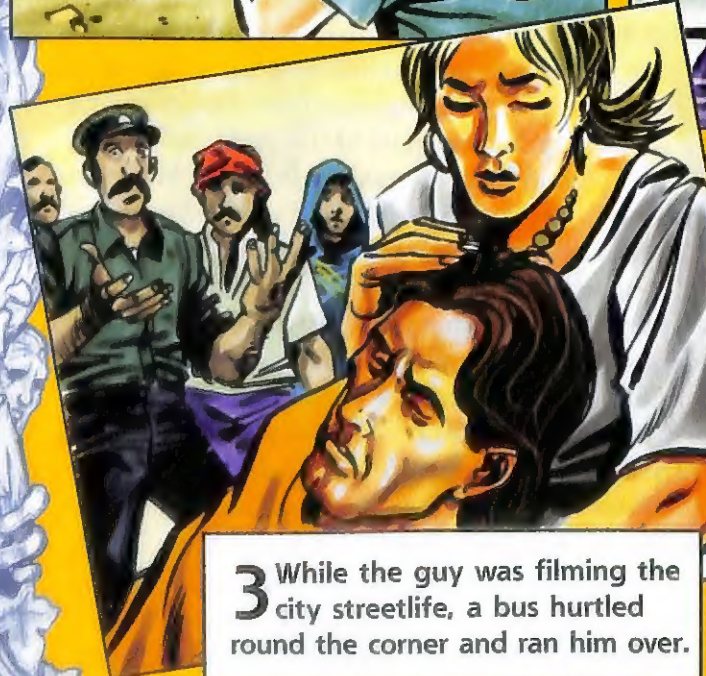
A friend heard this story while travelling in India...



1 A young couple were videoing their trip to India, much of which they'd spent in the countryside.



2 On reaching the busy city of New Delhi, they were overwhelmed by the chaotic traffic.

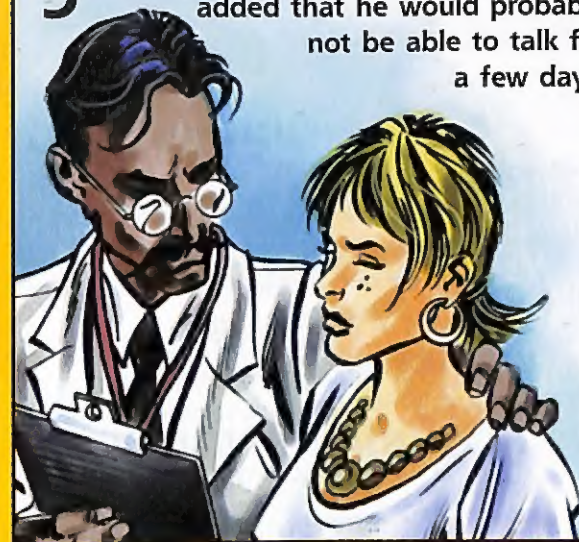


3 While the guy was filming the city streetlife, a bus hurtled round the corner and ran him over.

4 Grateful that they had taken out good travel insurance, the girl was able to get him into an excellent hospital.



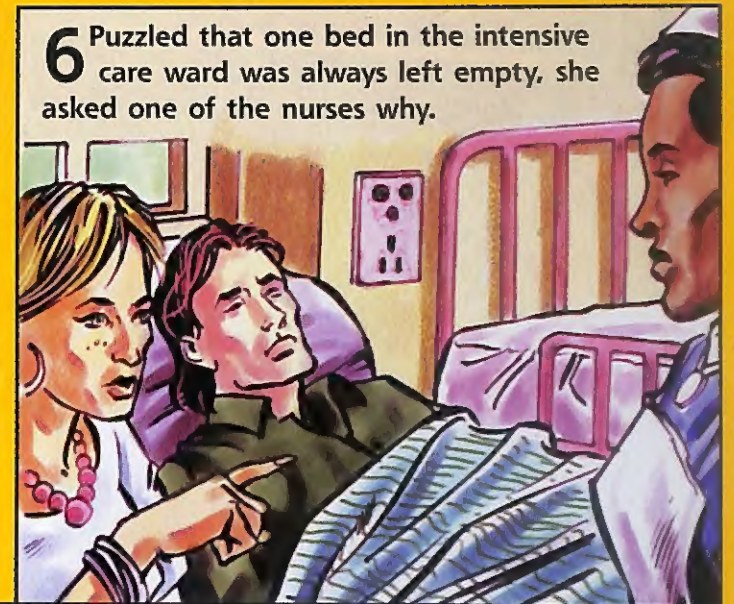
5 The doctors told her that he'd live, but added that he would probably not be able to talk for a few days.



7 "It's unlucky," said the nurse. "Everyone who has ever occupied it has died, so we try not to use it!"



6 Puzzled that one bed in the intensive care ward was always left empty, she asked one of the nurses why.



8 The next day, after a disastrous plane crash, even the 'unlucky' bed had to be used, and a very old man was put in the bed on a life support machine.



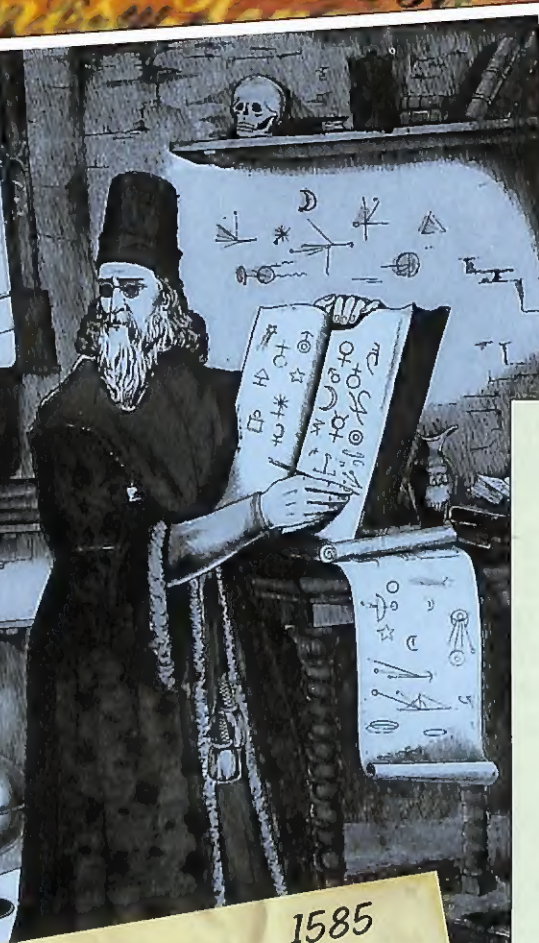
9 That evening, the girl watched in open-mouthed horror as the cleaner came in and unplugged the life support machine by the 'unlucky' bed. The girl ran to the rescue just as the woman was about to plug in her vacuum cleaner!



NOSTRADAMUS

STRANGE
BUT TRUE

Evidence no: 38/1
The prophet
Nostradamus



Special Investigation File: 38

Subject: the 16th-century prophet
Nostradamus
Place: Provence, France

SpineChiller creates a file

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On December 14, 1503 in Provence, France, Europe's most famous prophet was born. Michel de Nostradame, known as Nostradamus, spoke many languages and studied astronomy, philosophy and medicine. He cured the sick when a plague swept through France and earned a name for himself as Europe's best plague healer.

But his reputation was ruined when the plague struck again and he failed to save his own wife and children. He spent the next six years wandering through France and Italy, before settling back in Provence. It was here that he retreated to a secret place to write his spine-chilling prophecies.

1585

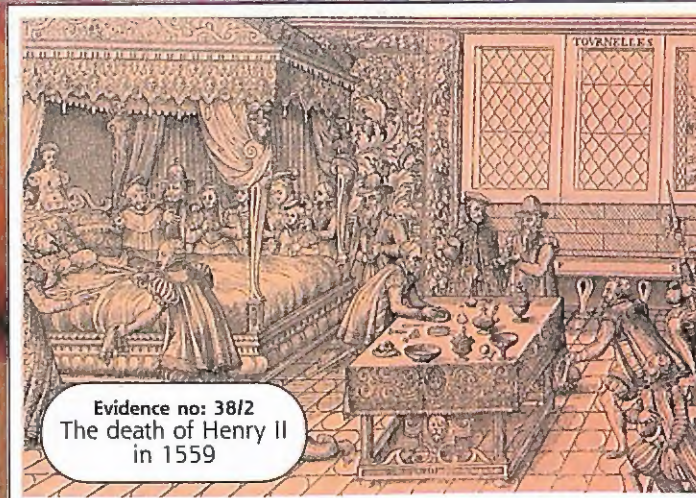
My dear granddaughter
When I was 12 years old, like you my dear, I lived in the same town as the famous prophet Nostradamus. One day, I saw him fall down on his knees and bow before a young Franciscan monk who was driving his herd of swine through the streets. I just couldn't understand it. Nostradamus even called him 'Your Holiness'! After all these years, I now know why. That same humble monk has just been appointed Pope Sixtus V, so Nostradamus was calling him by his future title. Sadly, he will never know that his prophecy came true because he died on 1st July 1566.

Your loving grandfather

Evidence no: 38/3
The Great Fire of
London in 1666



Evidence no: 38/2
The death of Henry II
in 1559



DEATH OF KING HENRY II

Nostradamus' prophecy has come true. The King of France is dead. A young knight pierced him through the throat and eye with his lance during a duel ten days ago. He died in agony.

Catherine de Medici, Henry's wife, is said to be devastated, but not shocked. She learned of her husband's fate four years ago in the book of prophecies written by Nostradamus!

The prophet described the king's death in horrifying detail. Century 1, quatrain 35 reads:

"The young lion should overcome the old one, in a field of combat by a single duel."

In a golden cage he shall put out his eye, two wounds from one, then he shall die a cruel death."

THE INVESTIGATOR'S REPORT

In his book of prophecies, known as 'The Centuries', Nostradamus is said to have predicted major events such as:

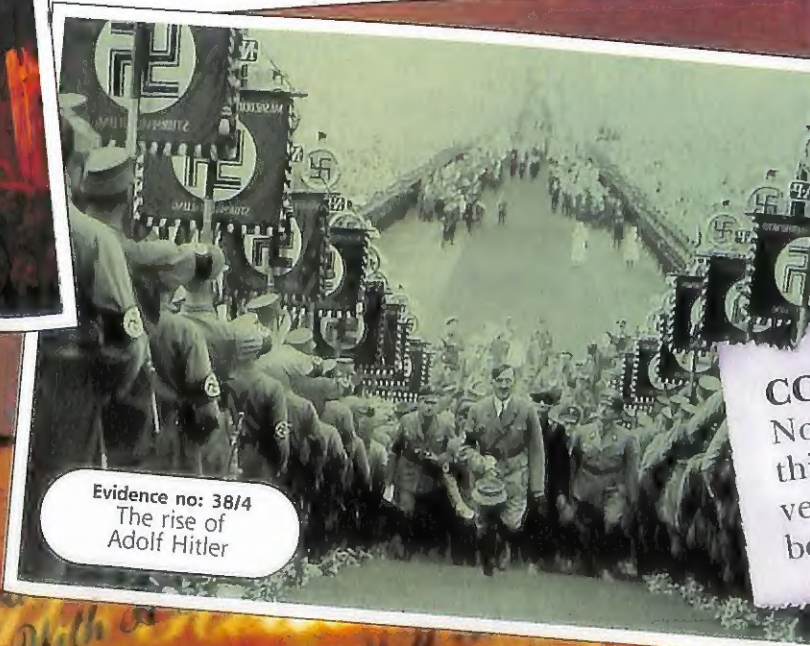
- The Great Fire of London in 1666
- The rise of Adolf Hitler in 1939
- The Hiroshima and Nagasaki nuclear bombs in 1945
- The assassination of US president JFK in 1963
- Halley's Comet in 1986
- His own death in 1566!

Does that mean these predictions could come true?

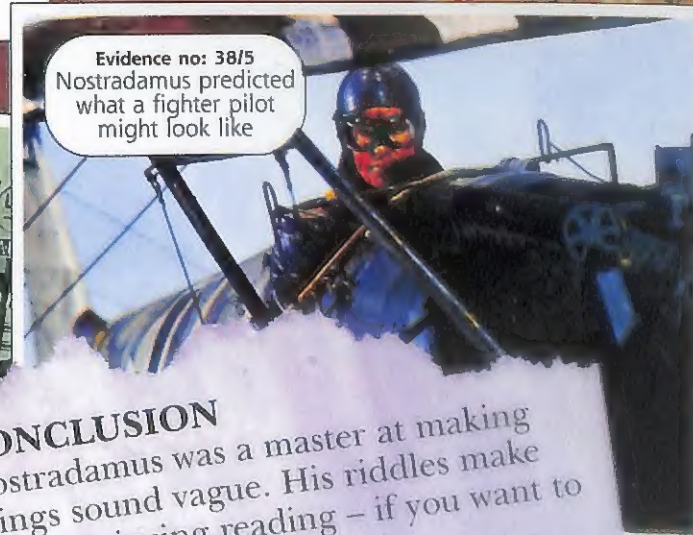
- Planes will bomb New York
- Prince Charles will be the last British King
- The end of the world as we know it will be in 1999!

There is no need for worldwide panic, just yet. Nostradamus wrote his terrifying verses (called quatrains) in riddles to make them difficult and confusing to understand. To make things trickier, they're in French, Greek and Latin! That means that, over the years, people have interpreted his prophecies in different ways to mean entirely different things. Also, interpreters usually wait until after the events before declaring that Nostradamus predicted them - when they have the benefit of hindsight. With all this in mind, it is pretty safe to say that the world won't end next year! What does seem amazing is that Nostradamus described things that weren't even invented until centuries after his death - like fighter planes, submarines and nuclear bombs!

Evidence no: 38/4
The rise of
Adolf Hitler



Evidence no: 38/5
Nostradamus predicted
what a fighter pilot
might look like



CONCLUSION
Nostradamus was a master at making things sound vague. His riddles make very convincing reading - if you want to believe them, that is!

Unexplained



Chapter 1

The Pit And The Pendulum

Retold from a story by Edgar Allan Poe

I was sick and dying when, at long last, they untied me and let me sit. I felt my senses starting to leave me. The last words I heard were those of the dreaded death sentence as it was passed on me. After that, the voices of my judges – the Inquisitors – merged into one, and then I could no longer hear at all. Yet for a short while I could still see them in their black robes. I could still make out their thin, white lips as they shaped words of hatred for me. I saw their lips form the syllables of my name, and I shuddered. Looking around, I could just make out the fur-lined walls of the chamber. Then my gaze fell upon seven tall candles standing on the table ahead.

At first, the candles seemed friendly, like white, slender angels placed there to save me. Then a terrible wave of nausea flooded over me as the candles changed their

identity. The angels had become spectres with heads of flame. They would be of no help to me. Suddenly, a thought stole into my fevered mind. What sweet rest and peace there must be in the grave. The thought took time to sink in. As it did, I saw the Inquisitors, the judges of my fate, disappear. At the same time, the candles went out and my bewildered mind seemed to be swallowed up in a mad and terrible rush towards hell. Then there was only silence, stillness and blackness.

I lapsed into a strange and dream-like state. At times, I think I was conscious, but I cannot quite describe how I felt. As for how long this strange state lasted, I cannot begin to tell. Now only several hazy shadows of memory remain in my mind. These tell of tall figures lifting me up, just as one lifts a coffin. They carried me down – down – still down, further than I thought possible. Then I remember vague feelings of being unnaturally still and surrounded by flatness and dampness. But after that, all became madness.

Very suddenly, there came back to my soul some sound and movement – the movement of my own heart – and, in my ears, the sound of its beating. Then came a tingling sensation throughout my body, which lasted for a very long time. Then, again suddenly, I began to think and started to shudder with terror as I

recalled the full horrors of my trial, the judges, my sentence and the sickness that overcame me.

I still had my eyes closed, but I could tell that I was lying flat on my back. There seemed to be nothing holding me down. I reached out my hand. It fell heavily upon something damp and hard. I let it lie there for many minutes while I tried to imagine what it could possibly be. I still did not dare to open my eyes. It was not that I feared some ghastly sight. I was petrified that there was nothing at all to see. In the end, I became totally desperate. So I opened my eyes quickly. Then my worst fears were confirmed.

The blackness of night completely surrounded me. I struggled hard for breath. The depth of the darkness stifled me, but I tried to stay calm and think. It felt as though a long time had passed since I had received my sentence. The guilty usually perished at an auto-da-fé, and I remembered that one had been planned for the night that I was condemned to death. Yet I knew I was not dead, so what had happened? Had I been thrown back into my cell to await the next set of executions. No! The cells of the condemned were made of dry stone and had light. So what was this dark, damp place that I found myself in?

The most terrible of ideas then struck me and began to drive me towards madness again. When I regained my senses, I leapt to my feet. Every fibre of my body was trembling. I thrust my arms wildly above and around me in all directions. I felt nothing, yet was too petrified to move a step in case I

found my way barred by the walls of a tomb – a tomb prepared for me.

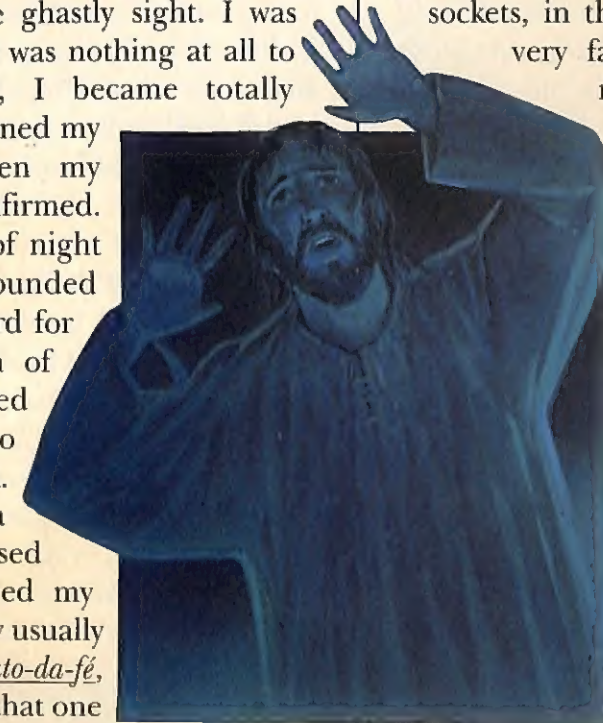
Beads of sweat stood out on my forehead. Terrified, I waited and waited. Eventually, the suspense became too much and I carefully shuffled forward with my arms stretched ahead of me. My eyes were straining from their sockets, in the hope of catching even a very faint ray of light. I walked

many paces without finding anything other than total darkness. I breathed more freely. The space was quite big. It appeared that I had been saved from the very worst death of all – I had not been buried alive.

But other fears soon began to grow. I had heard stories about the terrible dungeons of the Inquisition. They were too ghastly to repeat, except in a low whisper. Would I be left to starve in this deep underground blackness? Or was there

a fate even worse in store for me? I never doubted that the final result would be my death. I knew the Inquisition much too well to hope otherwise. I had only to learn when and how my dying would occur.

At last, my outstretched hands touched something solid. It seemed to be a stone wall, very smooth, slimy and cold. I traced a path along the wall, trying to follow it round, but I could not work out the dungeon's size. I searched for my knife. It had been in my pocket when I had been led into the chamber of the Inquisition. I reasoned that if I could wedge the knife into a small crack between the stone blocks,

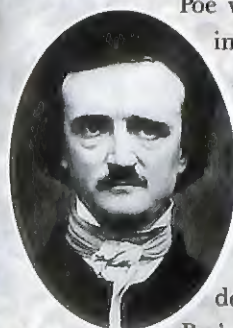


I could use it as a marker. But the knife had gone, along with all my clothes. They had been replaced by a simple robe of rough material. I tore a small part of the hem from the coarse fabric and placed it on the floor, so that it stuck out from the wall.

My plan was to walk right around my underground prison, and to use the fabric marker to tell me when I had completed the trip. Surely I could not fail to find it again? However, I had failed to consider the dungeon's size and my own awful weakness. The ground was extremely wet and slippery beneath my feet. I staggered onward for some time, before stumbling and falling over. I tried to get up but simply could not, and soon fell asleep where I lay.

THE FACTS

Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) was a highly influential American short story writer, poet and literary critic. He first became famous for a poem, *The Raven*, but today is better known for his powerful short stories.



Poe wrote many horror tales, including *The Fall of the House of Usher* and *The Masque of the Red Death*. Many experts consider his dark tale *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* to be the world's first modern detective story.

Poe's short life was troubled by poverty and alcohol problems. His death was as mysterious as anything he ever wrote. It may have been caused by drinking too much, by taking drugs or by catching rabies. It has even been suggested that it occurred after someone had put an evil curse on him.

When I awoke, I found a small loaf of bread and a jug of water beside me. I was too exhausted to work out how they might have got there. I just ate and drank greedily. With much effort, I began my tour around the dungeon once more, and eventually returned to the strip of material. I added up the number of paces I had taken – fifty-two before I had fallen and forty-eight afterwards. The total of one hundred paces was equivalent to a distance of about fifty yards. I now had an idea of my prison's size, but not of its shape, as I had come across many angles in the wall on my trip.

There was little point in my research. I had no hope of escape or safety, but curiosity drove me on. I summoned up enough courage to leave the walls, aiming to cross the cell floor to the other side. I stepped slowly and cautiously. The floor felt solid but was covered in slime. I had walked ten or twelve steps when I slipped and fell on my face. The fall confused me and it took some time for me to realise that there was something strange about how and where I lay. My chin was resting on the dungeon's floor, but my lips and the rest of my head were lower and touched nothing. My forehead was bathed in a vapour, and the smell of fungus and decay filled my nostrils. I stretched out my arm and felt around. It soon

became clear that I was perched on the very edge of a circular pit.

As my hands groped wildly, I broke off a small stone fragment from the pit. Then I let it fall into the abyss and waited. It took many seconds for the stone to plunge into water. As the echoes rose out of the pit, I heard the sound of a door or a hatch above me opening and closing rapidly. For a moment, a faint gleam of light flashed through the gloom, but it faded away just as suddenly as it had arrived.

I congratulated myself on avoiding the doom prepared for me. If I had taken one more step before I had fallen, it would have been my end. But I knew all about the Inquisition and its tyranny. Its members killed some people simply by inflicting physical pain. But they subjected others to great mental torment first. For me they had chosen this, the very worst of all agonies. As a result of my long suffering, my nerves had been shattered. Now I trembled even at the sound of my own voice. I teetered on the brink of madness and was a fitting subject for the evil of the pit, or whatever terrifying new torture awaited me.

WORD POWER

Inquisitors – officers or members of the Inquisition, a medieval religious court that sentenced many people to death, especially in Spain

nausea – the state of feeling sick

auto-da-fé – a mass execution carried out by the Inquisition. The Portuguese words literally mean 'act of faith'.

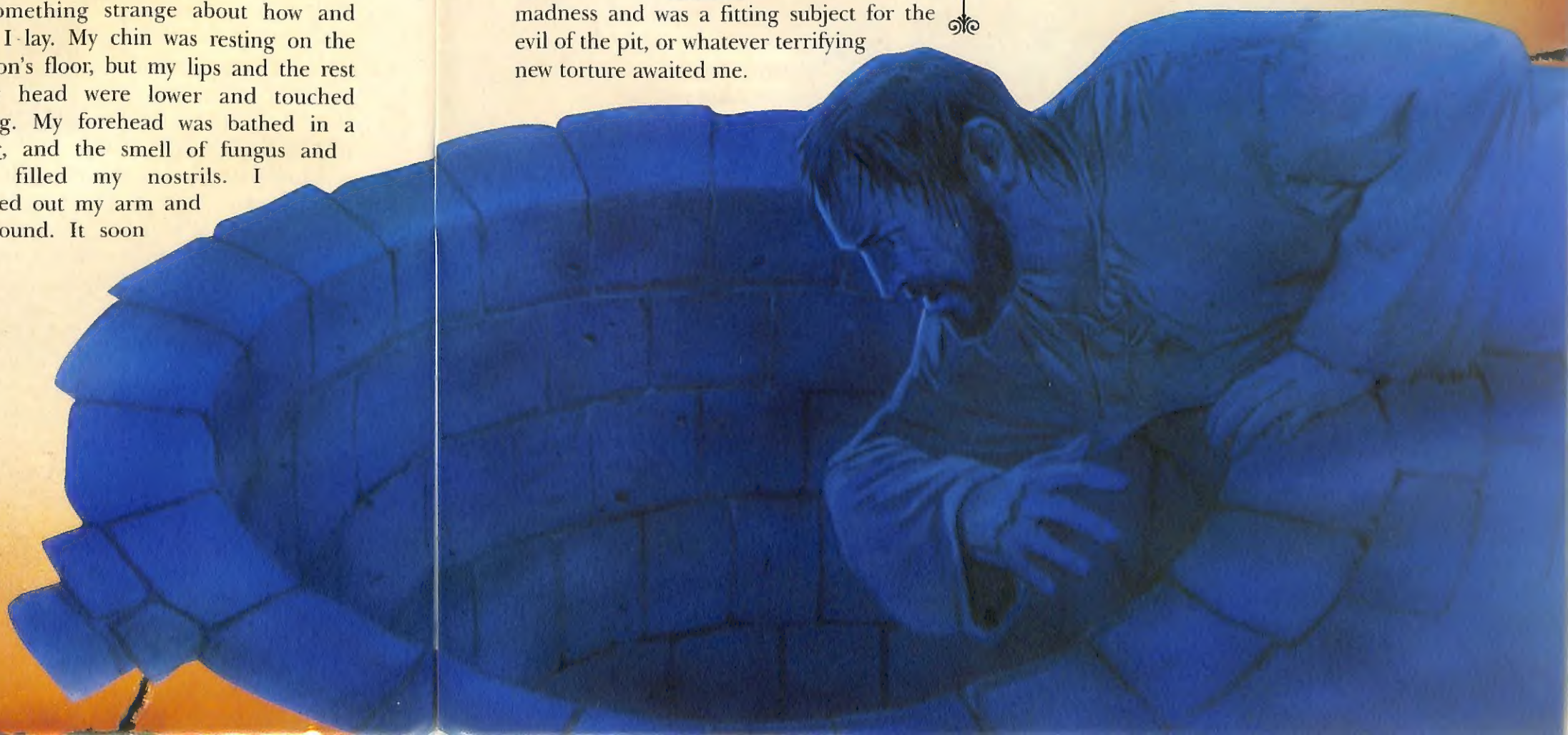
vapour – a mist or gas

abyss – a very deep hole

tyranny – great but misused power

teetered – moved backwards and forwards as though about to fall

Chapter 2: The pendulum appears





SUPERSTITIONS

Do you touch wood for luck? Or walk around ladders rather than underneath them? If so, you, like millions of people around the world, are influenced by superstitions.

WHAT'S A SUPERSTITION?

Superstition is the belief that you can create good luck, or stop bad luck – simply by doing, or avoiding doing, certain things.

Different cultures have very different superstitions which have been passed down through the generations, sometimes for thousands of years.

Here is a spooky selection of superstitions and some ideas on how they got started.

TOUCHING WOOD

You must have heard the phrase, "touch wood" and wonder how it came about? Early humans believed that different gods lived in the trees and if they stroked wood, it would bring them luck.

SPILLING SALT

When salt was the only way to preserve food, spilling it was thought to bring bad luck. But a pinch of salt over the left shoulder put things right, as it went in the eye of the devil who was following behind!



▲ ALL IN A GLANCE

A beautiful ancient Egyptian painting of the eye symbol that some people believe protects them from evil.



▲ LUCKY WISH

Not only children make a wish when they blow out candles – this superstition follows us in to old age!

THE EVIL EYE

Nearly every country around the globe at one time believed in the power of the human eye.

The belief was that an angry stare from someone with the power of the evil eye was enough to bring death and destruction.

Those with a squint or with eyebrows that met in the middle were instantly under suspicion. In some parts of the world, the symbol of the eye is still worn as jewellery, or even painted on to cars and buses to ward off the evil eye.

MAKE A WISH

The tradition of making a wish as you blow out birthday candles goes back to ancient Greece and to the birthday celebrations for Artemis, goddess of the hunt and the moon.

According to legend, cakes in the shape of the moon were baked and candles placed in the temple. During the celebrations, the candles were blown out with one breath to bring the favour of the goddess.

RIGHT/WRONG SIDE OF THE BED

Which side of the bed do you get out of? Right or left? All things 'left' were once considered unlucky, simply because most people were right-handed!

LUCKY HORSESHOES

Early humans believed iron and fire to be sacred. And blacksmiths – who worked with iron and fire – were thought to have spooky powers. People believed that these powers rubbed off on the horseshoes they made. Today, horseshoes that point up mean good luck and horseshoes that point down mean bad luck. So watch out!



CROSSING YOUR HEART

If you want someone to believe you, you might just say:

"Cross my heart and hope to die; drop down dead if I tell a lie." Well, this superstition comes from the olden days. If you lied on oath then, it was called perjury – and the punishment was death by hanging!

BREAKING A MIRROR

Breaking a mirror is meant to bring seven years of bad luck. This comes from an early belief that your soul appears in your reflection. If you broke the mirror, you would harm your reflection – and, therefore, yourself. But, you can 'wash away' bad luck by throwing the broken mirror into a river, so the superstition goes.

WALKING UNDER LADDERS

Are you a person that won't walk under a ladder because it's said to be unlucky? Not so long ago, a grisly way to find yourself under a ladder was at a hanging. The noose was put around the condemned person's neck and the ladder was kicked away! Now that is pretty unlucky!

UNLUCKY 13

Some people avoid this number at all costs. But do you know why? The number is generally associated with the Last Supper of Christ, when 13 people sat down to eat,

including Judas Iscariot who betrayed him. But the superstition goes further back than that. A Norse myth tells how 12 gods were eating when the Spirit of Strife appeared and a quarrel began that led to the death of Baldur, the favourite god.

THE COLOUR GREEN

Green is still thought by some to be an unlucky colour to use indoors. This superstition is based on fact because green paint used to contain lots of arsenic, a deadly poison!

THOSE WHO DARE!

To anyone who is superstitious, joining the Thirteen Club of London, or the American National Society of 13 Against Superstition, would be

a fate almost worse than death! Members meet up on Friday the 13th, sit down at a table for 13 and then carry out a stream of bad luck superstitions. They open umbrellas, spill salt, and generally tempt fate.

Are they brave, or simply foolhardy?

At least they all claim to have suffered no ill effects from their antics!

▲ SAFETY IN NUMBERS

These horseshoes on a door in India are intended to ward off evil. Hope no one's noticed that some are upside down!



▲ TEMPTING FATE

The Eccentric Club of 1936 living up to its name as members risk all sorts of bad luck.

WHAT A CHEEK ►

A saucy postcard takes a different view on walking under ladders.



SPOOKY SKYWAYS

BATTING ORDER!

The flying bats are all shapes and sizes. How many can you spot and which one is the odd one out?

FREAKY FLIERS!

If F = 6 and K = 11, substitute the numbers on the merry-go-round for letters. Then rearrange them to identify one of the freaky fliers enjoying all the phantom fun-of-the-fair! But beware! There are three numbers you must ignore!

PICTURE PUZZLE

Fit the five shapes into the blank parts of the main picture.

HIGH-FLIER!

What type of flying craft are these? Write the answers in the boxes. Then rearrange the shaded letters to find a really high-flier!

If $F = 6$ and $K = 11$, substitute the numbers on the merry-go-round for letters. Then rearrange them to identify one of the freaky fliers enjoying all the phantom fun-of-the-fair! But beware! There are three numbers you must ignore!

Fit the five shapes into the blank parts of the main picture.

What type of flying craft are these?
Write the answers in the boxes. Then
rearrange the shaded letters to find
a really high-flier!

UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS!

Five small frames each show just part of something that flies. It may be a machine, toy or just a common creature. Can you say what they are?

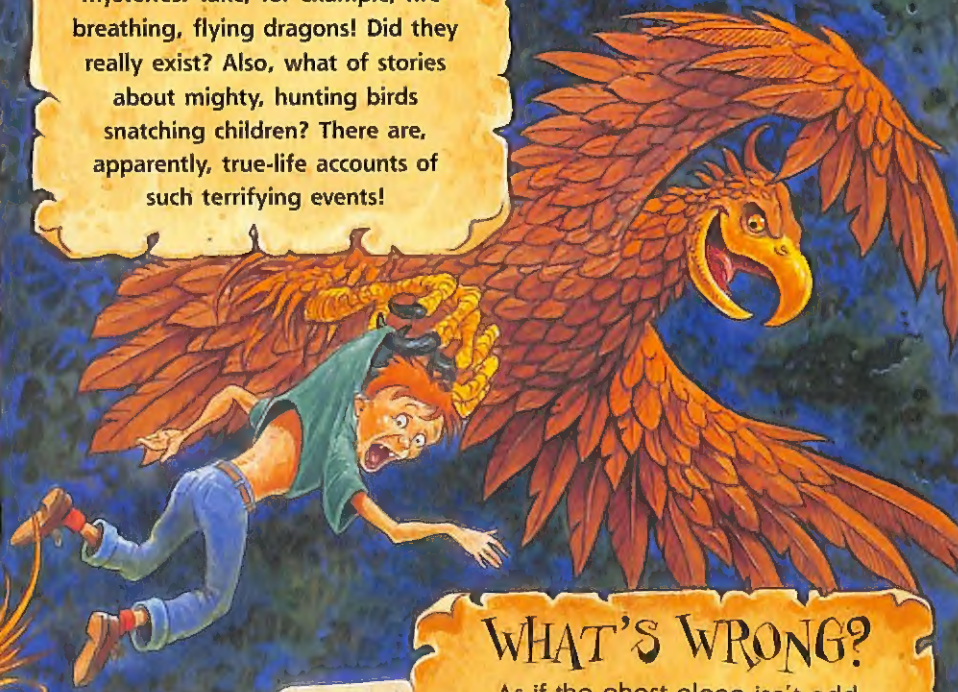


PHANTOM FACTS

An eerie Great War story tells of a member of the Royal Flying Corps who lost heavily at cards. "I'll settle with you in the morning," the pilot angrily told three colleagues. Next day, he flew with one of them. But their plane crashed and they were both killed. Shortly afterwards, the remaining two pilots also crashed but weren't killed. They each claimed they had seen the unhappy card-player in their rear cockpit!

FEARSOME FACTS

The skies have long held their mysteries. Take, for example, fire-breathing, flying dragons! Did they really exist? Also, what of stories about mighty, hunting birds snatching children? There are, apparently, true-life accounts of such terrifying events!



WHAT'S WRONG?

As if the ghost plane isn't odd enough, there are four things wrong in this picture. What are they?



ANSWERS

FREAKY FILMS: The numbers correspond to the letters of the alphabet, eg A=1 and Z=26. The three unwieldy numbers are 7 (G), 17 (Q) and 23 (X), leaving 22, 1, 13, 16, 9, 18 and 5 which spells VAMPIRE. BATTING ORDER: The bat under the flying carpet is missing a thumb claw. HIGH-FLIER: glider, biplane, Airship, helicopter, (hot-air) balloon, and a space shuttle. The rearranged letters in the shaded squares spell ASTRONAUT. PICTURE PUZZLE: 1E, 2A, 3C, 4F, 5D, 6D. WHAT'S WRONG?: (1) a front wheel is missing from the biplane; (2) a passenger is pointing out of a window; (3) the spider dangling by the card-shark pilot's ear has wings; (4) the ace card has a club symbol in the bottom right corner. UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS: (1) feather, (2) balloon, (3) kite, (4) sycamore helicopter, (5) butterfly wing.